Departmental Honors (Honors Thesis)

HONORS THESIS GUIDELINES

Committee on Undergraduate Honors

Introduction

The Senior Honors Thesis is the culmination of your college experience, emphasizing critical thinking, writing, and independent work. Your thesis may relate to your major, but it does not have to. You are encouraged to select a topic that you find exciting and satisfying, and that will allow you to be creative. Completing an Honors Thesis is an opportunity to:

- Satisfy your intellectual curiosity
- Develop transferable skills
- Work closely with faculty mentors
- Open windows into future professions

Students who successfully complete their theses are eligible to graduate with honors in the discipline in which the thesis is written. Though not a requirement, completion of an honors thesis is highly recommended for BA majors and for all students who are considering pursuing an advanced (masters, doctoral, or professional) degree.

The Honors Thesis is, in most cases, a two-semester project completed under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Students completing theses in the Natural Sciences may be given permission to undertake a three-semester project. Since the thesis constitutes six to twelve semester hours of the baccalaureate degree program, it should reflect a significant time commitment, be of high quality, and demonstrate personal intellectual growth.

If you are thinking of writing an honors thesis, please contact Dr. Frank Heiland, Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Honors [frank.heiland@baruch.cuny.edu] one full semester prior to the anticipated start date. Most students write a thesis in their senior year, though it may be possible for upper juniors to enroll.

Proposing a thesis project

In order to pursue an honors thesis project, a student must meet the following qualifications:

- 3.5 GPA in the discipline in which the thesis will be completed.
- 3.5 cumulative GPA.
- Approval of proposed thesis mentor, department honors coordinator/committee, and Chair of College Committee on Undergraduate Honors.

Please note that some departments/disciplines may have additional prerequisites. If a student has fulfilled the perquisites in more than one discipline/department, it is possible to undertake an interdisciplinary thesis project [IDC 6001H/6002H]. While most students complete traditional research projects, creative endeavors [e.g. writing a play or novel] may be considered.

Please consult with the department in which you plan to do honors works and with the Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Honors for further information. If you are enrolled in the Baruch College Honors Program, you should also consult with your academic advisor.

Preparing a Prospectus

The "Application and Prospectus for an Honors Thesis" cover sheet (2 pages, available at this site <http://blsciblogs.baruch.cuny.edu/honors/honors-program-requirements/academic-requirements/>. Scroll down to click on "Honors Thesis Application"). Instructions can be found there, but the major requirements include:

1. A statement of the major objectives of your proposed study.

2. A description of the procedures you will follow to complete your research.

3. A statement of where the experimental, field study and/or the library work is to be performed.

4. A short bibliography, including some of the seminal works relating to the thesis topic

DUE DATE:

The prospectus must be completed during the semester prior to the one in which you expect to begin the thesis [usually upper junior or lower senior year]. The **proposal must be submitted to the Chair of the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors committee by April 1st for a project starting in the fall semester or November 1st for a project starting in the spring semester.** The committee will review the proposal and approve it or suggest revisions. **If you are asked to make changes then you must complete your revisions and resubmit the prospectus to the committee chair no later than May 1st for enrollment in the fall semester or December 1st for enrollment in the spring semester. Students may not enroll in either Thesis I [6001H] or Thesis II [6002H] during the winter session or summer session terms.**

The prospectus must be approved by your mentor, department chair, and the Committee on Undergraduate Honors. The Committee on Undergraduate Honors reserves the privilege of recommending changes in the thesis proposal. Students must not commence work on their theses until the proposal has been given full approval. Where human subjects are involved, students will also have to secure Institutional Review Board approval before collecting data.

For more guidance on writing a prospectus and selecting a mentor, please see Charles Lipson's ***How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from your First ideas to your Finished Paper***, which is on sale in the Baruch College bookstore. This text is available as an e-book through Baruch's library: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/baruch/docDetail.action?docID=10216904

<u>After approval: The first semester</u>

- Register for XXX 6001H (this will be done for you, by the Chair of the Baruch College Committee on Undergraduate Honors). You are strongly encouraged not to register for more than a total of 16 credits in the semesters in which you are writing a thesis. Thesis writing is a very intensive and time-consuming process. You will not be registered for XXX 6002H until your mentor gives his/her written approval to the Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Honors. Approval is based on evidence that you are making satisfactory progress toward the completion of your project.

- Depending upon the discipline, the thesis project normally requires 3-4 credit hours per semester for two consecutive semesters. In the natural sciences, three-semester projects may be approved.
- Most of the work during first semester is done with your mentor and the Honors Thesis Workshop. By the second semester, your mentor should set up a departmental committee of at least two additional readers.
- Your mentor and departmental committee will determine the appropriate presentation style for thesis in its discipline. Consult with your mentor to reach understanding on what is expected of your thesis.

Support throughout the thesis-writing process

In addition to the primary guidance of your mentor, the following resources are available to support you in the process of writing your thesis:

- Honors Thesis Workshop. This workshop, led by the Writing Center and the Library, meets approximately twice a month during the semester and provides support in the research and writing associated with the thesis process--for example, in articulating a research question, using sources strategically, drafting, and revising. Contact Writing Center Director Keri Bertino (keri.bertino@baruch.cuny.edu, 646-312-4028, NVC 8-185 with any questions.

- Baruch Research Librarian Professor Stephen Francouer (Library Building; Room 316; 646 312-1620, Stephen.Francoeur@baruch.cuny.edu).
- You are also strongly encouraged to purchase Charles Lipson's ***How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from your First ideas to your Finished Paper***, which is on sale in the Baruch College bookstore. This text is available as an e-book through Baruch's library: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/baruch/docDetail.action?docID=10216904
- Your faculty mentor may recommend additional reference books that are appropriate for your discipline.
- Writing Center consultants are available for weekly or occasional meetings to help you in developing your project, structuring your argument, revising on the sentence level, etc. Schedule and appointments are available through www.baruch.cuny.edu/writingcenter, or contact Writing Center Director Keri Bertino (keri.bertino@baruch.cuny.edu, 646-312-4028, NVC 8-185).

Thesis Requirement

Due Date

One hard copy, one e-mail attachment (as a Word document), and one copy of your thesis on a flashdrive must be submitted to the Chair of the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors on or before the first Monday in December or the last Monday in April, depending upon the semester of completion. If the student anticipates any difficulty meeting this deadline, s/he must consult with the thesis mentor and with the Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Honors.

Although there are certain formal requirements of every thesis, listed below, **the vast majority of requirements, such as page count, appropriate presentation and citation styles, etc. will be determined individually for each student in conversation with his or her mentor.** Students should work with their mentors to determine a length appropriate to the scope and discipline of their project. Please do this work early so that expectations are clear throughout the thesis-writing process. Remember, a thesis is significantly more than a traditional term paper. It entails at least as much time and effort as two upper level honors courses.

Content

- The thesis must start with a brief (at most one-page) abstract. It must include a table of contents [including chapter titles], and it must include a standard system of citation commonly employed in the thesis writer's field.
- There must be a clearly articulated thesis statement and the paper must in a well-written, well-organized, and coherent fashion address the thesis statement. The methodology used to defend the thesis argument must be made clear. The Committee on Undergraduate Honors takes writing very seriously. If you are having trouble with the organization of the paper or writing style, you should consult with the Writing Center (VC 8-185) as well as your mentor. Keep in mind that the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors is composed of faculty representing several disciplines. While your paper should be written in a format that is appropriate for your field of study, the methodology and discussion of findings should be written in a manner that is understandable to educated readers who are not experts in that field.

Format

- Cover page
  - Departmental Certification of the completed thesis shall take the form of a statement, which becomes the thesis cover page and includes the following information:
    - Student's name
    - Title of thesis
    - Date of submission
    - Signature of faculty sponsor
    - Signatures of at least two additional full-time Baruch faculty members in a relevant field of study who have read and approved the thesis
    - The cover page must also include the following statement with the appropriate phrases inserted: "Submitted to the Committee on Undergraduate Honors at Baruch College of the City University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business Administration/Bachelor of Science in [Discipline] with Honors."
    - The thesis requires this cover page in order to be passed.
  - Each student should submit 1 bound copy and 1 electronic copy of his/her thesis for review. The original cover page of the hard copy should be submitted separately. The electronic copy should be submitted in two forms: as a word document emailed to the chair of the Undergraduate Honors Committee and on a flashdrive that is submitted with the bound copy.
  - Citation style: Each student should use a citation style (e.g. MLA, APA, etc.) appropriate for the discipline in which he/she is working. Please determine this with your mentor.

Thesis Evaluation

- At the end of the first semester, if the student's progress is satisfactory, the mentor assigns a "Y" grade. This allows the student to register for XXX 6002H. If the work is not satisfactory, the mentor may assign a letter grade, precluding the student from continuing the thesis project the following term.
- At the conclusion of the second semester, the mentor assigns a letter grade to the project, with retroactively applies to the prior semester as well. If the mentor assigns grade of "A" or "A-" and departmental committee approves, the thesis is forwarded to College Committee on Undergraduate Honors.
- Students whose work is not deemed to have earned an "A" will still receive academic credit and a grade, to be determined by the thesis mentor.
- The Departmental Honors Committee will certify the thesis for presentation to the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors.
- The College Committee on Undergraduate Honors determines whether or not a thesis has earned the distinction of graduation with honors in the designated discipline. All decisions of the committee are considered final.
- The regulations shall apply to all students in all disciplines. In cases where a contradiction between these regulations and those of the Departmental Honors Committee arises, the regulations of the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors shall prevail.
- Theses awarded honors will normally be displayed in the Newman Library and on the library website (with written permission of the thesis writer).
- Action on theses submitted past due dates shall be deferred by the College Committee on Undergraduate Honors until the following review cycle, so long as the student has not completed all degree requirements. No provision is made for review during the summer.

Mandates

- Theses will not be accepted by the Committee on Undergraduate Honors after the due date.
- Theses must be read and approved by the student's mentor and two additional readers in the discipline in which the thesis is being written.
- In order to receive approval for graduation with honors, the thesis MUST include:
  - A signed cover sheet
  - An abstract
  - A table of contents
  - A well-articulated thesis statement
  - A research methodology statement that describes the main definitions, methods, procedures, and techniques used to defend the thesis argument
  - Strong support of that thesis statement throughout the body of the paper
  - Citations standard to the field in which the thesis is written (e.g. MLA, APA)